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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
IO-13 ACDA-12 EB-08 DOE-11 SOE-02 COME-00 TRSE-00
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R 161545Z MAR 78
FM USMISSION USBERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6451
AMEMBASSY BONN
INFO AMEMBASSY BERLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 USBERLIN 0619

E O 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: PGOV WB
SUBJ: CONVERSATION WITH BERLIN'S GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE

SUMMARY: BERLIN'S GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE, IN MARCH 15 CONVERSATION WITH VISITING EUR/CE OFFICER CHESTER AND IN TELEVISION INTERVIEW MAR 13, ASSESSED SOVIET BERLIN POLICY TO BE ESSENTIALLY DEFENSIVE IN NATURE AT THIS TIME. HE SAID PUBLICLY THAT PROPER WESTERN RESPONSE TO SOVIET PRESSURES ON BERLIN SHOULD BE TO CONTINUE TO MAKE FULL USE OF ALL PROVISIONS OF THE QUADRIPARTITE AGREEMENT, WHILE EXERCISING CAREFUL POLITICAL JUDGEMENT IN THE DETERMINING WHEN AND HOW WEST BERLIN TIES WITH THE FRG SHOULD BE DEVELOPED. IN CONVERSATION WITH CHESTER, STOBBE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT SOVIET WEST BERLIN POLICY WAS ESSENTIALLY A FUNCTION OF THEIR CONCERN OVER INTERNAL GDR DEVELOPMENTS. THEY WANT TO SEE A QUIET WEST BERLIN WHICH WOULD REDUCE THE NORMAL "DEMOCRATIC RADIATION" FROM WEST BERLIN. STOBBE ALSO FELT THAT FRG-GDR RELATIONS WERE IN A
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PERIOD OF STAGNATION, ALTHOUGH THOSE ITEMS NOW IN THE PIPELINE WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE COMPLETED. END SUMMARY.

1. GOVERNING MAYOR STOBBE RECEIVED EUR/CE OFFICER CHESTER MARCH 15 (ACCOMPANIED BY MISOFFS SEMLER AND BECKER). IN A GENERAL DISCUSSION ON DIFFERENT SUBJECTS, STOBBE DESCRIBED IN UNUSUALLY CLEAR TERMS HIS VIEWS ABOUT CURRENT SOVIET POLICY

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TOWARD WEST BERLIN. HE SAID THAT THE MAIN SOVIET CONCERN WAS UNDOUBTEDLY PROBLEMS IN THE GDR. ABRASIMOV, WHO STOBBE NOTED CONSIDERS HIMSELF TO BE ONE OF THE TOP HUNDRED SOVIET POLITICIANS, HAD THE JOB OF INSURING THAT THE GDR REMAINED A HEALTHY AND COOPERATIVE PARTNER OF THE USSR. BASICALLY, THE HEALTH OF THE USSR'S EMPIRE IN EASTERN EUROPE DEPENDS ON ITS GRASP OVER THE MIDDLE GERMAN TERRAIN. WEST BERLIN IS FOR THE SOVIETS A TOTALLY SECONDARY MATTER EXCEPT WHEN ITS LOCATION AND ACTIVITIES IMPINGE UPON GDR STABILITY. COMMENTING ON HIS FEBRUARY 24 DINNER WITH ABRASIMOV, STOBBE SAID ABRASIMOV CLEARLY WAS NOT INTERESTED IN DISCUSSING BONN-BERLIN TIES. RATHER, ABRASIMOV WAS CALLING FOR A WEST BERLIN SITUATION WHICH WOULD NOT AFFECT RELATIONSHIPS WITHIN THE COMMUNIST BLOC. FOR EXAMPLE, A KOHL VISIT TO EAST BERLIN, WHEN HE MIGHT BE ENTHUSIASTICALLY RECEIVED ON THE ALEXANDERPLATZ IN CONNECTION WITH A WEST BERLIN VISIT, WAS PRECISELY WHAT THE GDR DID NOT WANT. STOBBE ALSO RECOUNTED THAT DURING THE RECENT VISIT TO DRESDEN OF WEST BERLIN'S OUTSTANDING THEATER "SCHAUBUEHNE", THE ACTORS HAD BEEN TREATED TO THREE-QUARTERS OF AN HOUR OF SOLID EMOTIONAL APPLAUSE. THIS IS THE KIND OF EAST GERMAN REACTION THAT WORRIES ABRASIMOV. (STOBBE THEN ADDED HE HOPED TO GO TO THE GDR POSSIBLY WITH HERTHA BSC, WEST BERLIN'S FIRST DIVISION SOCCER TEAM, OR WITH THE BERLIN PHILHARMONIC IN MAY).

2. LOOKING AT THE GERMAN SITUATION IN MORE GENERAL TERMS, CONFIDENTIAL

STOBBE FELT THAT THE CURRENT INTERREGNUM IN THE USSR, WHERE EVERYBODY IS WAITING TO SEE WHAT WILL HAPPEN, WAS THE DOMINANT FACTOR IN CENTRAL EUROPE. THERE IS STAGNATION IN FRG-GDR RELATIONS WHICH COULD WELL LAST A GOOD WHILE. STOBBE WAS CONFIDENT THAT THOSE ARRANGEMENTS SUCH AS AUTOBAHN CONSTRUCTION TO HAMBURG WHICH WERE "IN THE PIPELINE" WOULD BE COMPLETED. HOWEVER, HE WAS NOT SO SURE THAT THE NEXT FEW YEARS WOULD SEE MAJOR NEW PROGRESS. THIS WOULD CAUSE HIM A PERSONAL PROBLEM, HE ADDED. FOR A WHILE, HE WOULD BE ABLE TO POINT TO THE AUTOBAHN AS A CONCRETE ACHIEVEMENT. EVENTUALLY, HE WOULD SUFFER IF HE WERE UNABLE TO POINT TO ADDITIONAL PROGRESS. LACK OF PROGRESS WOULD FORCE HIM TO TAKE A MORE POLEMICAL, POLITICAL APPROACH IN HIS PUBLIC STATEMENTS.

3. WITH RESPECT TO WEST BERLIN ENERGY SUPPLY, A HIGH-PRIORITY SUBJECT, STOBBE EXPRESSED CERTAINTY THAT HE WOULD BE ABLE TO WORK OUT AN ARRANGEMENT WHICH WOULD LEAD TO THE PURCHASE OF SOME ELECTRICITY FROM THE GDR ON A TRIANGULAR BASIS WITH THE FRG. HE SAID HE HAD HEARD ABOUT SOME CIRCLES IN THE GDR WHO ARGUED WITHIN GDR COUNCILS FOR A

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VERY FORTHCOMING TRADING APPROACH TO WEST BERLIN IN THE HOPE THE RESULT WOULD EVENTUALLY BE SOME DEGREE OF DEPENDENCE ON THE GDR. IN GENERAL, HE DID NOT SEE MUCH PROSPECT THAT THE GDR WOULD HELP WEST BERLIN BECOME AN EAST-WEST TRADE CENTER.

4. WITH RESPECT TO THE IDEA OF A STOBBE TRIP TO MOSCOW, STOBBE SAID HE DID NOT RPT NOT THINK IT WOULD TAKE PLACE, ALTHOUGH HE HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT THE SOVIETS WOULD LIKE HIM TO COME. WHILE THE FRG AMBASSADOR IN MOSCOW NEED NOT BE ON THE SCENE ALL THE TIME ("THAT WOULD BE TOO PRIMITIVE"), A DECEND ROLE WOULD HAVE TO BE BUILD IN FOR HIM DURING THE STOBBE VISIT. FALIN HAD PROMISED HIM TO SOUND OUT MOSCOW ON THIS POINT. STOBBE THOUGHT IT SOMEWHAT PROMISING THAT ABRASIMOV HAD NOT RAISED THE VISIT, WHICH SEEMED TO LIE WITHIN THE COMPETENCE OF FALIN. SOVIET COORDINATION WAS BETTER THAN HE HAD EXPECTED.

5. SOME OF THE ABOVE THEMES WERE CONTAINED IN A MARCH 13 SFB

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TELEVISION PROGRAM KONTRASTE DURING WHICH STOBBE AGAIN CHARACTERIZED MOSCOW'S PRESENT POLICIES TOWARDS BERLIN AS "FUNDAMENTALLY CONSERVATIVE" AND "DEFENSIVE IN THEIR ESSENTIALS." STOBBE TOLD HIM AUDIENCE THAT SOVIET POLICIES IN THIS AREA ARE CONCERNED PRIMARILY WITH MAINTAINING THE STABILITY OF THE GDR AND REINFORCING ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE SOVIET BLOC. THE SOVIETS ARE NOT INTERESTED IN ATTACKING OR UNDERCUTTING WEST BERLIN, BUT RATHER THEIR POLICY IS DESIGNED TO CONTAIN WEST BERLIN'S INFLUENCE ON THE UNSTABLE EAST GERMAN SOCIETY AROUND IT.

6. ON THE QA, STOBBE CONSIDERED IT TO BE IN BERLIN'S BEST INTERESTS TO PURSUE A POLICY OF STRENGTHENED BONDS WHICH LINKED THE CITY TO THE FRG; IN OTHER WORDS, TO EXHAUST THE POSSIBILITIES PROVIDED BY THE QA, PROVIDED IT MADE SENSE TO DO SO. IT WAS IMPORTANT, HOWEVER, THAT ONE NOT GO A "SINGLE MILLIMETER" BEYOND THAT WHICH IS PERMISSIBLE, BUT AT THE SAME TIME THE WEST SHOULD NOT DENY ITSELF UNNECESSARILY USE OF THE POSSIBILITIES WHICH THE QA OFFERS. THE GOAL OF WESTERN POLICY IN BERLIN SHOULD BE TO STEER A STABLE "MIDDLE COURSE".

7. STOBBE ALSO EXPRESSED SOME UNHAPPINESS WITH FRG MANAGE-MENT OF INNER-GERMAN RELATIONS. LEAVING WISCHNEWSKI TO COORDINATE THIS IMPORTANT ASPECT OF GERMAN POLICY WAS A MISTAKE; ONE MONTH WISCHNEWSKI HANDLES MOGADISCIO, THEN HE TAKES ON A LABOR DISPUTE, AND IN BETWEEN VISITS EAST BERLIN. (ON WISCHNEWSKI'S GDR VISIT, STOBBE THOUGHT THAT AFTER ALL THE CRITICISM, ONE POSITIVE RESULT HAD OCCURRED IN THAT THE AUTOBAHN TRAFFIC WAS RUNNING MORE SMOTHLY.) STOBBE FELT THAT THE FRG SHOULD BE MAKING A CONSTANT FLOW OF PROPOSALS TO THE GDR, ACTING AS THE DYNAMIC PARTNER IN THE RELATIONSHIP, AND FORCING THE SED POLITBURO TO CONSIDER CONFIDENTIAL

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EACH PROPOSAL ON ITS MERITS.

8. COMMENT: WE FIND THESE VIEWS SOMEWHAT UNUSUAL INASMUCH AS THE WEST BERLIN PRESS CONTINUES IN THE BEST ETHNOCENTRIC TRADITION TO REGARD EVERY SOVIET ACTION IN WEST BERLIN AS DIRECTED AGAINST THE CITY ITSELF. WE SUSPECT THAT STOBBE MAY HAVE A MORE REALISTIC VIEW OF SOVIET PRIORITIES IN FOREIGN POLICY AT THIS TIME. ALTHOUGH HE WAS NOT PLEASED AT THE PROSPECT THAT A SOVIET INTERREGNUM WOULD DAMPEN EAST-WEST PROGRESS IN EUROPE FOR SOME TIME TO COME,HE DID SAY THAT WEST BERLIN COULD SURVIVE SUCH A COOLING-OFF PERIOD, AND THAT IT HAD PERHAPS ONE ADVANTAGE TO THE WEST. THIS WAS THAT THE DYNAMISM OF THE WEST WOULD BE LESS IN EVIDENCE AND THEREFORE LESS DESTABILIZING IN EASTERN EUROPE DURING SUCH A PERIOD OF SLOW MOTION. STOBBE HAD BEEN CONCERNED THAT DISSIDENT ELEMENTS, ESPECIALLY IN POLAND BUT PERHAPS IN THE

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GDR, WERE HEADING TOWARD A CONFRONTATION WHICH COULD ONLY END IN ANOTHER PERIOD OF TOTAL REPRESSION. A FEW YEARS OF RELATIVE INACTIVITY WOULD DAMPEN THIS KIND OF FERMENT WHICH COULD TOO EASILY END IN CATASTROPHE. THIS VIEW OF THE UNDESIRABILITY OF DESTABILIZING DISSENT IN THE GDR IS WIDELY TYPICAL OF THE SPD.GEORGE

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